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Isaac Shelby and Andrew Jackson letter to John C. Calhoun

Andrew Jackson

Isaac Shelby

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Nashville 30th Oct. 1818.

Copy

Sir

We had the pleasure on the 23rd to address you, in which we made known to you that on the 17th we had the good fortune to conclude a treaty with the Chickasaw Nation of Indians, by which they have ceded to the United States, all claim or title to the land within the States of Kentucky and Tennessee.

To show you the disposition of the Indians and the determination of their Chiefs, neither to exchange or sell any part of their land, before we entered the Nation or met them in council; we beg leave to refer you to the letter of James Colbert of the 17th July 1818, in answer to one written by Genl. Jackson on behalf of the Commissioners, announcing to the Nation, that we had been appointed by the President of the United States, to treat with the Chickasaw Nation, for a purchase or exchange of land; which letter is herewith enclosed and marked A-, and to show you how we managed this discussion from its commencement, we beg leave to refer you to General Jackson's letter of the 24th of July, written in behalf of the Commissioners marked B-, which induced Major James Colbert, the interpreter of the Nation to write the General of date the 8th of August, appointing the time and place for holding the treaty, which communication is marked C-, and to which we beg leave to refer you.

We reached the Treaty Ground on the 29th Sept.

and

and for a detailed account of our whole proceedings, pending this negotiation we beg leave to refer you to the Journal signed by Col. Robert Butler our Secretary and approved by us which document accompanies the treaty and will be handed to you by Col. Robert Butler whom we have charged with its safe delivery, and for which service we hope you will allow him the pay of Secretary and his expenses; we could not think of trusting so valuable a paper to the conveyance of a mail.

You will see from the documents referred to, that we soon found (to be successful) we must address ourselves to their fears and indulge their avarice. The goods subject to our control would not answer this purpose, and if they had they could not have been used without discovery, nor were they worth the amount for which we were authorized to draw sufficient to obtain the object; the chiefs knew the value of the land we asked for, and in consequence of this knowledge, set a higher price upon it themselves. The Colberts wielded the Nation, and of course laid several hundred per cent upon their own influence. The reserves suggested themselves to us. There were citizens whose interests in obtaining the cession was such as made them willing to advance on the reserve, but we thought it best to hold an election in the Government, and if it chose to make the advance, an assignment will be made on the Deed, which will be admitted to record in the County wherein the land lies, but if the Government does not approve of this measure, the Deed is to be delivered to James Jackson of Nashville, to whom it is made, who will advance the sum drawn for. We would suggest that Martin Colbert goes

on to the City, to await the ratification of the Treaty. Genl. Jackson has assured him, that as soon as the ratification of the treaty takes place, Mr. Thomas ^{Herkman} ~~Herkman~~ will advance him the goods, and has instructed Mr. James Jackson to advise him accordingly.

We can assure you that without this document, we could not have obtained the treaty, and we have placed the land reserved, in a better state for the benefit of society, and the individual advancing the amount, is willing to retain it, if the executive should think proper to make that election.

You will perceive by the transaction, that we created a fund out of their own property, to bring over the influence of the Nation and obtain this cession, so important to the United States and the Western World, for the strength of the population of the country ceded, will be sufficient for the defence of the West, in the event of war in that country, and the report of Major Lewis will show its extent and immense value.

We trust you will see in our procedure, all our genius and efforts used to obtain the object of our mission, and the means used by which we obtained success, we hope will be approved by the President.

The goods forwarded to the Bluff subject to our order, we have agreeable to the instructions contained in your letter of the 29th of September, relative to those goods for the Annuity furnished Mr. B. Sub factor with an extract, and directed him to hold them, subject the order of Mr. McKenney Superintendent of Indian Affairs, we will conclude by remarking that there is a great saving by paying

paying the Annuities in money, the enumeration being made, the amount can be divided into shares as has been done at the last payment, be placed in the hands of the four Chiefs of the four different Departments, who can assemble the Indians of their respective Departments in their own neighbourhoods, and distribute the same to them, without its costing the United States a single ration, when an annuity in goods will cost them half the amount of the goods in rations, and the poor of the Nation receive but little benefit therefrom, as there is always a great proportion of the goods lost or wasted, as will be found in the instance of the goods lately sent on.

J. C. Calhoun
Secretary of War.

We are, Sir, very respectfully
Yours H^l Servants

Isaac Shelby
Andrew Jackson

copy of a letter
from the late Gov^r
Isaac Shelby &
Andrew Jackson
concerning prisoners
to treat with the
Chickasaw Indians
to J. C. Calhoun
Sec of War dated 30th
of Oct. 1818 - taken
from the files of
the war office. They
signatures the proper
handwriting of
Isaac Shelby
Andrew Jackson